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Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Letter dated 5 April 1999 from the Ambassador, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit, enclosed herewith,* a letter which His Excellency Zivadin Jovanovic, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has addressed to H.E. Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross. I would like to ask you to have it circulated as an official document of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 9.

(Signed): Branko Brankovic

Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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* The enclosure is reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.

Belgrade, 3 April 1999

Dear Mr. Sommaruga,

I consider justified your timely reaction to the initiative of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia to convene a meeting of national organizations of the Red Cross in order to assess the current humanitarian situation in the FR of Yugoslavia, in the wake of a grave humanitarian catastrophe caused by NATO aggression.

It is of utmost importance in a situation when for ten days and nights totally unprovoked armed aggression of USA and NATO against the FR of Yugoslavia, a sovereign country, a member and founder of the United Nations, rages unchecked. Thousands of tons of NATO and US bombs and explosives have been dropped since the beginning of the aggression, on 24 March, on cities, villages, refugee camps, cultural-historical monuments, religious shrines, schools, hospitals, bridges, factories and other civilian targets across Yugoslavia. In addition to extensive material destruction it caused a lot of innocent civilian victims. NATO and US aggression has been coupled with fabrication of lies and unseen anti-Yugoslav campaign, particularly concerning the alleged "humanitarian catastrophe" with a view to misleading the international public and drawing the conclusions that suit to goals of aggressor.

For a long time now, the aggressor has been preparing a humanitarian catastrophe and managed with the bombs and missiles to produce one. The columns of refugees from Kosovo and Metohija, the consequences of the aggression, are used in the international public of justify the crime and expansion of aggression, threatening with new victims. NATO bombs are not selective - they have equally tragically threatened and still threaten all citizens - Serbs, Montenegrins, Albanians, Muslims, Romanies, Turks, Goranies, Egyptians.

I should like to inform you that the Government of the FR of Yugoslavia on 31 March 1999 launched an appeal to all citizens of Kosovo and Metohija, particularly Kosmet Albanians, no to leave their homes, least of all their State, despite the NATO air strikes against civilian targets and sympathize with others in need, help each other and the State to defend itself against NATO aggression. To those who have been displaced in the wake of the aggression, the Government provides humanitarian assistance. The victims and plight of the civilians have been dramatically increased by daily escalation of bombing the centres of big towns such as Belgrade, Pristina, Novi Sad, Cacak and others. So far, more than a hundred civilians were killed and more than one thousand were wounded. Material damage exceeds several billion US $ and increases by the day.

Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga
President of the International
Committee of the Red Cross
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In the past few days, NATO forces have been deliberately bombing also Albanian settlements in order to generate new displacements, increase humanitarian catastrophe and ensure public support for the expansion of their criminal aggression.

Regional water supply system was destroyed in Novi Sad, leaving 600.000 people without water.

NATO bombs have so far hit two centres for refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, hospitals, more than 100 schools and day-care centres, many cultural monuments, religious sites, telephone and other communications, infrastructure (railways, airports, bridges, roads), private homes, farms, industrial and business facilities which have no military purpose whatsoever.

In a shelter in Kursumlija, 11 refugees lost their lives. In refugee centres in Nis and Pristina 15 persons were killed. The destruction of the store houses of liquid chemicals and precursors for chemical industry in Pancevo, Belgrade, Pristina and other towns, poses a serious threat to environment.

I am addressing you, in line with the mandate of the International Committee of the Red Cross to undertake all within your powers to put an end to this aggression and prevent a humanitarian catastrophe of large proportions, not only in the FR of Yugoslavia, but in the region and Europe at large.

Please accept, Mr. Sommaruga, the assurances of my high consideration.

Zivadin Jovanovic
(signed)

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